



Welcome to the Clark County Community Development e-News. We send this publication out once a month to announce the latest in what's happening. We will attempt to cover a broad range of topics that we hope will be of interest to you. We need your input! We welcome your comments about our news bulletin; and if you have topics you would like us to cover and we haven't, we'll do our best to accommodate you!★

What is a section?

Occasionally, in a public meeting or board work session, the question is asked "What is a section?" Technically, a section is an area of geographic measurement that equals 640 acres and is exactly one-mile square. However, a section is an official mapping unit and a historical measurement.

In America we use the Federal Township and Range System, which is a cartographic mapping system that consists of larger units called Townships. Each Township is 6 miles by 6 miles square. The Township is subdivided in 36 Sections that are 1 mile by 1 mile in size (or 640 acres).

The historical importance of this system ties back to the Homestead Act of 1862. The U.S. Congress passed a law, that President Abraham Lincoln signed, that allowed pioneers to homestead land for free in the West. The homesteader had to be at least 21-year old and could claim 160 acres of land (or

what is called a "¼ Section"). If you built a house and lived on the ¼ Section of land for five (5) years, then it was yours.

You could also buy it for \$1.25 an acre and it was yours in just 6 months. By 1900, about 600,000 farmers had claimed some 80 million acres of land. The Act was in force until 1976. ★

Community Development University

The spring term has begun. A schedule of presentations with class descriptions is available on our Web site. Plan on attending these informative sessions on the second and fourth Wednesdays from 4:00 to 5:00 pm in the Commissioner's Hearing Room on the sixth floor of the Public Service Center. The Public Service Center is located at 1300 Franklin Street in downtown Vancouver. ★

Tips to get around our new Web site

The drop down menu on the county's home page contains a list of Community Development's divisions as well as some of our major programs. You will also find a link to the Clark County Code and Maps Online in this menu. This drop down menu is located at the top of each and every page of the county's Web site.

All Community Development pages contain a set of navigation buttons on the left side of the screen. On the Community Development home page one of those buttons is called "Services by Division" which will lead you to links for each of the divisions. The left navigation buttons on each division's page will link you to a major section or topic within that division.★

April 2004

Inside:

- ★ What is a section?
- ★ Community Development University
- ★ Tips to get around our new Web site
- ★ When do I need a permit?
- ★ ComDev in the News



When do I need a permit?

Spring is usually the time of year that homeowners start thinking about tackling those home improvement projects. Before starting a new project, you need to think your plan through, consider the cost, determine who will do the work and whether or not you need permits. Many projects require permits from the county, city or other jurisdictions. For example, electrical permits for projects in the county's jurisdiction are issued and inspected by the Department of Labor and Industries. Public water and sewer connections require permits from the purveyors. But what about a small garden shed or simple remodel?

In the unincorporated areas of the county, some types of projects can be done without permits provided that the work is in compliance with codes and regulations, such as setbacks. For example, permits are not required for temporary portable RV covers (the kind you buy in kit form); storage sheds that are less than 120 square feet and under \$1,500.00 in value; decks that are less than 120 square feet and no more than 30 inches above ground; fences under 6 feet in height; concrete fences or retaining walls less than 4 feet in height, not supporting an embankment; prefabricated above-ground swimming pools of 5,000 gallons or less; and minor non-structural remodels of less than \$1,500.00 in value.

Other exemptions exist for agricultural buildings. Agricultural buildings are defined as structures where 100% of the use supports or houses farming activities including feed, livestock and farm implements

for private use. These structures do not require permits to construct or demolish. However, all demolition work requires notification to the Southwest Washington Air Pollution Control Authority.

Regardless of whether or not your work is exempt, construction cannot take place within setbacks or easements. This information can be obtained by visiting our website at www.clark.wa.gov/commdev or by calling (360) 397-2375 ext.5019.

Projects requiring permits that you might not think about include the installation of lawn sprinkler systems, wood and pellet stoves, demolition of structures (except for agricultural buildings), installation of driveways coming off a public road, repair to driveways where they intersect with public roads, re-roofing or re-siding your house, as well as replacing plumbing fixtures, air conditioning systems and furnaces.

Mobile homes fall into a different category with permits for remodeling or alterations (such as the addition of a wood stove or air conditioning unit) falling under the jurisdiction of the Washington Department of Labor and Industries. However, Clark County oversees the placement of mobile homes as well as construction of decks, sheds, carports or other accessory structures.

You may also discover that environmental permits are required in certain areas. For example, areas where wetlands, habitat, archaeological, geohazard (areas subject to landslides) and floodplains are mapped. Also, if you are on a septic



Quick Clicks

- Comprehensive Plan Update
- Data Library
- Team Focus
- Department Calendar

Divisions

- Animal Control
- Building Division
- Code Enforcement
- Permit Center
- Development Services
- Engineering Services
- Fire Marshal's Office
- Long Range Planning

www.clark.wa.gov/commdev

system you may need to meet additional requirements from the Health Department.

The county's Web site contains a variety of information on the Community Development home page. Additional information can be obtained by calling (360) 397-2375 ext. 5019.★

ComDev in the News

- "Amphitheater Exits. County should stick to the deal and try other traffic remedies this year." The Columbian (4-18-04).
http://www.columbian.com/04182004/clark_co/136268.html
- "Ridgefield Raid: Agents seize weapons, drugs." The Columbian (4-17-04)
http://www.columbian.com/04172004/front_pa/136057.html
- "Amphitheater wants traffic re-routed." The Columbian (4-14-04)
http://www.columbian.com/04142004/front_pa/135170.html
- "Cowlitz release plan for La Center casino." The Columbian (4-14-04)
http://www.columbian.com/04142004/front_pa/135168.html
- "County speaks up. Commissioners cite three reasons casino would have negative impact." The Columbian (4-12-04)
http://www.columbian.com/04122004/clark_co/134528.html
- "Pridemore earns builders' support." The Columbian (4-12-04)
http://www.columbian.com/04122004/clark_co/134483.html
- "La Center tallies potential losses."

The Columbian (4-10-04).

http://www.columbian.com/04102004/front_pa/134029.html

- "Schools try to go with growth flow." The Columbian (4-10-04).
http://www.columbian.com/04102004/clark_co/134062.htm
- "North county grid plan gains support." The Columbian (04-05-04)
http://www.columbian.com/04052004/clark_co/132683.html
- "Bar where man was killed has anew name." The Columbian (3-26-04).
http://www.columbian.com/03262004/clark_co/129702.html

What's On TV Tonight?

There is a lot on CVTV (channel 23) about Community Development. For example, you can watch the animal control, land use, and code enforcement hearings, as well as the county's Planning Commission. To see the complete schedule click here: www.cvttv.org ★

Expanding our audience

Do you know others who would benefit from this information? Any list serves that would be appropriate for us to post this on? On the other hand, if you would like to be taken off our e-mailing list, just let us know. Contact Désirée at desiree.demonye@clark.wa.gov.★